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Stop the Genocide

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While we are rightly focused on one of the worst natural disasters ever, the tsunami tragedy, we cannot afford to divert our attention from one of the worst man-made tragedies of our lifetimes: the genocide in Darfur. It has been five months since Congress declared that genocide was occurring in that region of western Sudan. Since then, however, the situation has deteriorated. The fighting between the government in Khartoum and the rebels in Darfur has escalated. Peace talks have collapsed, and even relief organizations such as Save the Children have pulled out of the region. There is now a real risk of its falling into chaos. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons are cut off from humanitarian assistance. There has been no progress in controlling the militias carrying out raids on civilian populations; violence against these people, including the rape of women and girls, continues with impunity.

As the tragedy of Darfur unfolds, history is watching, and we will be judged by only one test: Did we stop the genocide? Unless the answer is yes, then no summit, no U.N. Security Council resolution, no act of Congress or the administration has any meaning. With that in mind, it is time for the United States and the world to take action:

- **Deploy a real peacekeeping force.** There are now 900 African Union troops in Darfur, with plans for a total of 3,300. The deployment must be accelerated and expanded. The eventual number of African Union forces and their distribution around Darfur should be based on conditions, not on political expediency. If 3,300 troops cannot effectively patrol Darfur, a region the size of Texas, or if escalating violence overwhelms these forces, then thousands more should be deployed. We must also provide the African Union with whatever it needs to be effective, including equipment, communications, housing and transportation. If technical assistance is required, we should increase the number of U.S. and European advisers. If A.U. forces are unable to keep up with Sudanese or rebel troop movements, we should develop intelligence-sharing arrangements with A.U. officials. And we must formally expand the African Union's mandate to include the protection of civilians. In recent years, international peacekeepers have watched passively as atrocities unfolded in Rwanda and Srebrenica because they lacked the numbers, the resources and the mandate to prevent them. We must not allow this tragic history to be repeated in Darfur.

- **Put effective pressure on the government of Sudan.** The Nov. 19 U.N. Security Council meeting in Kenya produced a commitment by Sudan's government and the rebels in the south to reach a final agreement by the end of the year. We should support that agreement, but not at the expense of the people of Darfur. A clear signal must be sent that the United States will not reward Khartoum for progress on the north-south conflict unless there are real and verifiable changes in Darfur, including unrestricted access for humanitarian organizations and concrete actions to rein in the militias. In the meantime, we

should return to the Security Council and insist on a series of sanctions, beginning with an arms embargo against the Sudanese government, travel restrictions on senior Sudanese officials and a freeze on the assets of companies controlled by the ruling party that do business abroad. There are members of the Security Council who oppose sanctions, but this time we cannot take no for an answer. Better to risk a veto than to pass unanimous resolutions that do nothing to end the violence.

• **Let the world know that genocide will not be tolerated.** Twenty months after the conflict in Darfur began, not one punitive measure has been imposed on the government of Sudan. It is time for Khartoum to understand that anything other than demonstrable progress will result in sanctions. We should also be laying the groundwork for accountability. It has been more than three months since the United Nations decided to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate the atrocities in Darfur. We should be providing support for the commission and preparing mechanisms to bring those who are responsible to justice. We must also hold the international community to account, exerting serious diplomatic pressure on countries that oppose sanctions against the government of Sudan or that fail to support the African Union peacekeepers. We should be willing to stake our bilateral relations on these efforts in order to drive this point home.

Congress has provided funding for the humanitarian assistance in Darfur and for African Union forces. We stand ready to provide whatever else is necessary. But more importantly, the American people have spoken. All across the country, they have come together to demand immediate action. Religious organizations, civic groups, student activists and many others have said, with the passion that comes with moral clarity, that the only thing that matters is whether lives have been saved. We must heed their call and stop the genocide.

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